



Los Angeles County  
Children's Planning Council  
*Improving Children's Lives*

October 10, 2006

To: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair  
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Don Knabe  
Supervisor Michael Antonovich

From: Yolie Flores Aguilar  
CEO, Children's Planning Council

Subject: CalWORKs Stakeholders Process Evaluation – (Supervisor Molina, Syn. #62)

On May 10, 2005, your Board requested the Children's Planning Council, pending available resources, to submit a report on the CalWORKs Stakeholder Process since its inception in 2002, including the direct efforts of the process, lessons learned, and potential implications for the future collaborative planning.

Attached is the final report, called *Lessons Learned from the CalWORKs Prioritization Process*.

If you have any questions, please call me at (213) 893-0421.

cc: Chief Administrative Office  
County Counsel  
Executive Office  
Department of Public Social Services



Lessons Learned from  
**THE CalWORKs PRIORITIZATION PROCESS**

*A Report Commissioned by the Children's Planning Council for the  
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors*

October 2006

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2002, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) projected a massive shortfall in the County's CalWORKs program, the statewide Welfare-to-Work program administered by counties. This projected shortfall threatened both core CalWORKs services and a range of other services intended to help CalWORKs and other low-income families achieve long-term self-sufficiency.

In response, the Board of Supervisors directed the establishment of an innovative multi-stakeholder process to make recommendations about how to allocate a significantly diminished pool of funds for CalWORKs and related services. Begun in April 2002, the CalWORKs Prioritization Process continued through four fiscal years and generated recommendations to the Board about how to allocate funds totaling just under \$300 million.

The process yielded important results and vital lessons for the County of Los Angeles and many of its stakeholders and community partners. First, the process produced substantively and politically viable recommendations for the Board about how to respond to the projected shortfall, virtually all of which were unanimously adopted by the Supervisors. These recommendations positively affected the long-term development of the CalWORKs program.

The process helped create more effective working relationships among the stakeholders, even those who have been traditional adversaries. Moreover, participants and others now have a much deeper understanding of the potential for collaboration between

County Departments and community representatives, as well as the level of support and engagement that are required for such processes to be more than superficial exercises. For example, the financial and staff support provided by the Children's Planning Council (CPC) even before the Board formally approved the process were essential for the process to gain traction and credibility in the early stages of its development.

Another result from the process was its impact on many community members' perspectives on stakeholder processes. The community outreach and engagement strategies now pursued by CPC's Service Planning Area and American Indian Children (SPA/AIC) Councils evolved in part because of members' experiences in the Prioritization Process.

One set of lessons that emerged from the Prioritization Process clarifies what distinguished this process and its design from other County efforts. Never before had the Board requested recommendations from stakeholder groups about a portion of a Department's core budget, and the level of decision-making transparency at every stage of the process was extraordinary. The structure of the initial stakeholder groups and the level of responsibility and accountability required of their delegates were also unique to this process. So too was the scope of the initial community outreach and engagement effort that surveyed over 8,500 families and completed 27 focus groups in just three weeks time.

A second set of lessons from the process reveal what helped the process succeed, including the unique contributions made by the Board of Supervisors and Board Deputies, the DPSS Director and other staff from the Department, the CAO, and the Children's Planning Council and its SPA/AIC Councils. The remarkable knowledge and



expertise of the delegates were also essential success factors, as were the role and skills of the neutral facilitator.

The CalWORKs Prioritization Process has significant implications for future collaborative planning in the County. These efforts can produce coherent policy recommendations and innovative solutions not possible through typical decision-making processes, but they should not be entered into casually. In particular, Supervisors and sponsoring Departments must be open to adopting recommendations that emerge from the process before they ask stakeholder groups to commit the time, energy, and resources required for success.

The innovations of the CalWORKs Prioritization Process helped transform seemingly intractable conflict into generative learning and collaborative solutions, inspiring at least two subsequent county stakeholder efforts. While not appropriate for every context, the learning and decision-making model pioneered through this process can help accelerate the County's emergence as a learning organization.

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## INTRODUCTION

In January 2002, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) informed the Board of Supervisors of a projected massive shortfall in the County's CalWORKs<sup>1</sup> program, the statewide Welfare-to-Work program administered by counties. This projected shortfall threatened both core CalWORKs services and a range of other services intended to help CalWORKs and other low-income families achieve long-term self-sufficiency.

The magnitude of the shortfall was significant—initially projected at \$70 million in FY 2001-02<sup>2</sup> and even larger for FY 2002-03—but perhaps equally significant was the crisis it engendered among elected officials, government staff, and community organizations. Everyone interviewed for this report recalled the intensity of the Board's response to the interim DPSS director when he presented the projections to the Board. Supervisors were bitterly upset that they had not been informed much earlier of the potential shortfall. Long-time County staff could not recall a more pointed response from the Board toward a Department or its Director.

In its first response to the crisis, the Board directed DPSS to develop a short- and long-range plan to address the budget crisis with input from the community and advocates. On April 2, 2002 the Board modified its request, instructing:

the Director of Public Social Services, the New Directions Task Force,<sup>3</sup> and the Chief Administrative Officer, with input from the community,

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<sup>1</sup> The full name of the program is California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids.

<sup>2</sup> The actual shortfall turned out to be somewhat smaller because of additional revenues the Department received following the announcement to the Board.

<sup>3</sup> The New Directions Task Force is a body that includes Directors from all of the County Departments having responsibility for services for children and families, plus other bodies like the Children's Planning Council.



advocates, and the Commission for Public Social Services, to expand the scope of their assessment and prioritization of the Long-Term Family Self-Sufficiency Plan to include core and enhanced CalWORKs services; and present to the Board a proposed funding plan by June 17, 2002.<sup>4</sup>

This directive led to the creation of an innovative multi-stakeholder process to make recommendations about how to allocate a significantly diminished pool of funds for CalWORKs and related services. Begun in May 2002, this process continued through four fiscal years and generated recommendations to the Board about how to allocate just under a total of \$300 million.

Equally important, the process marked a significant turning point in the County's use of stakeholder processes, and included several innovations that had never before been implemented in Los Angeles County. The CalWORKs Prioritization Process has now served as a model for subsequent County initiatives: for example, the Department of Mental Health's budget deliberations in 2004 to resolve a projected \$30 million budget shortfall, and the planning and implementation efforts related to the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA).

The Board of Supervisors requested this report to document the "direct effects of the CalWORKs Prioritization Process, the lessons learned, and the potential implications for future collaborative planning in the County."<sup>5</sup> The report reflects data gathered from interviews of participants from the five stakeholder groups, Board deputies, and others who were also involved in the effort.<sup>6</sup> It also incorporates information gathered from

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Chaired by the Director of DPSS, the group's role has expanded to include leadership and oversight of multiple collaborative initiatives within County government that benefit children and families.

<sup>4</sup> From the transcript of the April 2, 2002 meeting of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors.

<sup>5</sup> From the transcript of the May 10, 2005 meeting of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors.

<sup>6</sup> The principal author of this current report, John Ott, was also the lead designer and facilitator of the process, and his direct experience clearly informs this analysis as well. Every attempt was made, however, to ensure that the



the final reports and Board letters submitted to the Board of Supervisors from all six iterations of the process, transcripts from relevant Board of Supervisor meetings, and an interim report completed after the third iteration of the process entitled *Measures of Success: The CalWORKs Prioritization Process in Los Angeles County*.<sup>7</sup>

The report is organized into four sections. Section 1 presents a brief summary of the design of the stakeholder process. Section 2 highlights both the direct and indirect results produced by the process. Section 3 describes the lessons learned, including how this process differed from prior County collaborative planning efforts and the factors that contributed to its success. Section 4 explores some of the implications that this effort may have for future collaborative planning processes in the County.

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hypotheses and conclusions articulated here accurately reflect the data from the interviews and the documents upon which the report is based.

<sup>7</sup> The Foundation Consortium commissioned *Measures of Success* on behalf of the Children's Planning Council. Also written by John Ott, the report was completed in November 2003 and focused on the CalWORKs Prioritization Process as an example of inclusive governance.

# Section 1

## A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS

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### SUMMARY

- Establishment of Five stakeholder groups
  - Three-step structure of the process:
    - data compilation and presentation
    - community outreach and engagement
    - delegates' deliberations
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Following the Board's directive on April 2, 2002, delegates from five stakeholder groups organized to participate in the process, including delegations from:

- The Department of Public Social Services (DPSS);
- The Chief Administrative Office (CAO);
- The New Directions Task Force (NDTF);
- The Public Social Services Commission (PSSC); and
- The Community Planning Group (CPG).<sup>8</sup>

Representatives from these five stakeholder groups ultimately agreed to adopt a three-step process to comply with the Board's directive to develop and submit recommendations by June 17, 2002.

### *Step 1: Data compilation and presentation.*

DPSS and the CAO's office compiled data to share with all of the stakeholder groups. This data included:

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<sup>8</sup> The Community Planning Group was a group that emerged through this process, comprising representatives from all 8 Service Planning Area Councils and the American Indian Children's Council (SPA/AIC Councils), and many other community-based organizations and advocacy groups.

- FY 2001-02 funding figures for CalWORKs programs and services, Long-Term Family Self-Sufficiency (LTFSS) projects, and the After-School Enrichment Program;
- Preliminary recommendations from DPSS and from the CAO about FY 2002-03 funding levels for CalWORKs programs and services;
- Outcomes and other program data, where available, from the 46 LTFSS projects that had already been implemented; and
- Additional data the five stakeholder groups believed necessary to make informed recommendations.

*Step 2: Community outreach and engagement.*

The Community Planning Group organized an extensive community outreach and engagement process, using the countywide system of SPA/AIC Councils and other networks of families and clients. Over 8,500 CalWORKs participants and other low-income and working poor families completed an extensive survey. The survey was administered in multiple languages over a three-week period at 230 different events in 124 different locations across the County. The feedback process also included 27 community focus groups involving CalWORKs participants and other low-income and working poor families. The essential question asked of the participants was: "What would make the most difference in your life right now to help you attain a good job and make progress toward self-sufficiency?"

The responses from these efforts were compiled and analyzed in a report by the Children's Planning Council entitled *Running Out of Time: Voices of Parents*

*Struggling to Move from Welfare to Work.* The CPG shared the data from this report with delegates during the deliberations in Step 3.

***Step 3: Delegates' deliberations.***

A work group comprised of delegates from the five stakeholder groups met intensively over a three-week period to review the data generated in Steps 1 and 2 of the process, and develop recommendations about FY 2002-03 funding for LTFSS projects, CalWORKs programs and services, and the After-School Enrichment Program. The final report from this first iteration of the process was submitted to the Board on June 17, 2002.<sup>9</sup>

There were five more iterations of the CalWORKs Prioritization Process after June 2002, developing recommendations for FY 2003-04, FY 2004-05, and FY 2005-06. The process used in each of these subsequent iterations replicated the essential structure of the original process, with the lone modification being that delegates reviewed the data from the May 2002 community outreach effort rather than initiating new outreach efforts. The scope of these subsequent deliberations was considerably narrower than the original June 2002 deliberations, in part because of instructions from the Board and because fewer dollars were available to the County. Over the course of these deliberations, delegates ultimately made recommendations totaling almost \$300 million in funding, achieving consensus on recommendations totaling \$283,935,950 or approximately 95% of the funding.

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<sup>9</sup> While the Community Planning Group completed the process in three weeks, the analysis and organization of the data took several more weeks. Consequently, delegates did not actually receive the data from the survey until 10 days before the first report was due to the Board. This was one of the unintended consequences of the aggressive timeline for the first iteration of the process.



## Section 2

### RESULTS OF THE PROCESS

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#### SUMMARY

- Substantively and politically viable recommendations developed for the Board of Supervisors
  - Long-term impact on the direction of the County's CalWORKs program
  - More effective working relationships among the stakeholders
  - Increased belief in the potential for collaboration between County Departments and community representatives, inspiring at least two other County efforts
  - The evolution of the community engagement strategies pursued by the Children's Planning Council's SPA/AIC Councils
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The CalWORKs Prioritization Process produced a number of results, some obvious, some less so. First, the process generated politically and substantively viable recommendations for the Board of Supervisors about how to absorb the projected budget shortfalls in the CalWORKs program and the Long-Term Family Self-Sufficiency projects. This was no small achievement, given the contentiousness and conflict that swirled around the Board offices during February 2002 when DPSS revealed the projected deficits. Few people would have predicted that just four months later the Board would have been presented with a clear path forward embraced by all of the key stakeholders. Even fewer would have predicted the level of collaboration and consensus that continued to deepen with each iteration of the process. One measure of the impact of this collaboration and consensus: the Board unanimously adopted over 99% of the delegates' consensus recommendations for funding. And over the six rounds of the process, only once did the Board overturn a consensus recommendation to eliminate funding for a project or service.

Second, the priorities developed by the delegates helped to evolve the long-term focus of the CalWORKs program. With each subsequent round of the Prioritization Process, delegates recommended and the Board approved an increasingly consistent set of priorities that privileged education and job training, and homelessness prevention services, over other kinds of programs. Most of these services that were funded across the multiple iterations of the process are now funded as part of the ongoing CalWORKs program. Moreover, DPSS has expanded the scope of both types of services within the CalWORKs program, building on the priorities established through the Prioritization Process.<sup>10</sup> Attachment 1 includes a summary of the programs implemented or sustained through this process that are now a permanent part of the CalWORKs program.

A third result of the stakeholder process was more effective working relationships among the stakeholders. For example, Board offices experienced an immediate decrease in complaints from advocates about DPSS almost immediately after the process began. All of the interviewees spoke of the increase in trust and communication that has continued well after the process ended. Others specifically identified improved relationships between DPSS staff members and community advocates, and among the members of the Community Planning Group.

A fourth result, perhaps less obvious than the first three, was the impact that the process had on the participants' understanding of the potential for collaboration between County Departments and community representatives. One person who was interviewed explained, "We now know how superficial some community planning

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<sup>10</sup> A different measure of success would assess whether the Prioritization Process produced better decisions than would have otherwise occurred. There is, of course, no way to objectively answer this question, in part because there is no way to know what decisions the Board would have made absent this process. Another measure of success would analyze the results for children and families produced by the funded programs. While DPSS has made significant strides in developing outcomes data for its programs and services, including many CalWORKs programs, very little of this data existed during the early iterations of the process.



processes have been, and also what can happen when we do it right.” Another person commented: “There are limitations to public-private collaborations when there isn’t a strong community counterpart.” The DPSS Director credits his experience in the stakeholder process with helping him more fully embrace a commitment to engagement and collaboration with advocates and community leaders. In addition, the process inspired at least one County Department to undertake an even more ambitious stakeholder process both to address a projected budget shortfall and to develop plans for programs to be supported with new State funding.<sup>11</sup> Finally, the CAO commented during his interview that this process represented an important step toward realizing his vision for the County’s on-going process of cultural transformation.<sup>12</sup>

A fifth result from the CalWORKs Prioritization Process was its impact on the Community Planning Group members’ perspective on stakeholder processes, particularly on the participants from the Children’s Planning Council’s SPA/AIC Councils. Specifically, SPA/AIC Councils now differentiate between two kinds of community engagement processes: processes designed to seek feedback from residents and families about how County Departments can better deliver services to clients, and processes that help families and residents act on their own behalf to improve outcomes for children and families, often in ways having little or nothing to do with County services. Over the last several years, the SPA/AIC Councils have increased their commitment to the latter kind of effort. They now focus much more time and resources

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<sup>11</sup> The Department of Mental Health’s stakeholder process has evolved from a 1,000 person process that involved over 29 stakeholder groups in 2004, to a process that involved over 11,000 people and delegates from over 50 stakeholder groups in FY 2005-06.

<sup>12</sup> The CAO summarizes the goals of this transformation process as follows: “[Our] success will be apparent when: we collaborate with each other and stakeholders when solving our problems; our actions reflect our stated values; we can positively answer the question ... ‘is anyone better off as a result of intervention?’; [and] when every employee is enrolled in helping us achieve [a culture based on collaboration, systems thinking, interdependence, results accountability, and learning].” Quoted from an undated paper entitled *Condition A – Condition B: Why Do We Do Strategic Planning?*, authored by David Janssen, CAO, Los Angeles County.

on helping families achieve their priorities for their children and communities through locally organized community building networks.

This shift in focus by the SPA/AIC Councils evolved in part because of CPG members' experience of how much time and energy the CalWORKs Prioritization Process required, and ultimately how narrow the opportunities for influence were from their perspective. For many CPG delegates, and other delegates as well, the CalWORKs Prioritization Process was both rewarding and profoundly frustrating. It was rewarding because of the substantive agreements reached and the demonstrable impact that the process had on the Board's decisions. It was frustrating because the scope of the process limited the opportunities that delegates had to more directly benefit CalWORKs participants. In particular, a number of delegates felt unable to respond in meaningful ways to many of the priorities articulated by families during the Step 2 community feedback process. These delegates would have preferred a longer process that addressed more fundamental program design issues within CalWORKs and LTFSS, but such deliberations were clearly beyond the scope of the process.

These limitations notwithstanding, the results of the CalWORKs Prioritization Process continue to positively affect both County policy and planning in direct and subtle ways. Section 3 catalogues some of the essential lessons learned across the multiple iterations of the process.



## Section 3

### LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PROCESS

#### *How this process differed from previous county stakeholder processes*

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##### SUMMARY

- Focus on a Department's budget
  - The high level of commitment to transparency in decision-making
  - Level of program and budget data shared with stakeholders
  - Community outreach effort sponsored by the Community Planning Group
  - Structure of the stakeholder groups and responsibilities of the delegates
  - The role of a neutral facilitator
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Everyone interviewed for this report agreed that the CalWORKs Prioritization Process differed substantially from previous County efforts to engage stakeholders and community representatives. One person observed that this process “was night and day [different from] anything before it, and truly unprecedented.”

What distinguished this process from previous County efforts? First, the focus. Never before had a portion of a County Department's core budget been opened for deliberations and recommendations from stakeholders outside of the Department. Previous efforts, including the Long-Term Family Self-Sufficiency process in 1999, had generated recommendations about how to allocate new dollars available to the County, or had developed recommendations about broad policy concerns. This was the first time, however, that anyone could remember the Board requesting recommendations about a portion of a County's core budget, not just from other County Department representatives, which would have been extraordinary by itself, but also from a group of organized community advocates and representatives. This commitment was

especially significant because of the stressful circumstances under which the process had been initiated. As one interviewee explained, “Had the stakeholder process not been successful, it would have been chaos.”

Second, the process was founded on a commitment to a high level of transparency in decision-making. For example, delegates explicitly agreed to share when they could speak on behalf of their constituency, and when they had to meet with their constituencies before making an agreement or pursuing a course of action. Moreover, the CAO and the Director of DPSS made a commitment that the agreements reached through the process would be communicated directly to the Board, and further agreed that they would not engage in a “process after the process” to work out what they would communicate independently to the Board. This commitment to transparency by the CAO and the DPSS Director significantly allayed the fears of the CPG and other delegates, and the discipline with which the DPSS and CAO delegates honored this commitment was striking.<sup>13</sup>

A related characteristic that also distinguished this process from previous County efforts was the level of program and budget data shared by DPSS, as well as the frankness of the conversations about policy and political constraints. While stakeholders lamented the lack of outcomes data, particularly during the early iterations of the process, everyone was impressed by the Department’s commitment to

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<sup>13</sup> One subtle action taken by the DPSS Director at the end of the first iteration of the process spoke volumes about his integrity, and his commitment to transparency. Several days after the delegates’ report was transmitted to the Board of Supervisors, DPSS was required to submit its official budget recommendations. The Director could have chosen to use this budget document to advocate for DPSS positions on issues where the delegates had not reached consensus, but he did not. Instead, he urged the Supervisors to review the entire final report submitted by the delegates, including the positions and rationales articulated in the divergent recommendations section, and then to reach their own conclusion. While the language in the Board letter was simple—“It is recommended that your Board determine, contingent upon funding available in the FY 2002-03 State Budget, how to utilize the remaining \$14,666,050 among the divergent recommendations set forth in Attachment 2” —its impact was significant. This action by the Director helped the delegates from other stakeholder groups trust the authenticity of the process.



make available hundreds of pages of program and budget data, and to quickly and willingly respond to additional requests for data and analyses. The interviewees unanimously observed that they had never before been a part of a collaborative process with so much information sharing and transparency of decision-making. Even though the amount and complexity of information were often described as overwhelming, most interviewees also described the transparency as highly positive. One interviewee commented: "I'm not sure everyone understood how progressive this process actually was. It was unheard of before this for a department to share this level of budget data with the public." Another elaborated: "It's often easy for outsiders to dismiss county employees as uncaring" if they are not privy to the structural barriers faced by bureaucrats—e.g, incompatible data systems, legal mandates, and political influences that constrain their decision-making processes.

A fourth distinguishing characteristic of the Prioritization Process was the extraordinary effort made by the Community Planning Group to reach out to people who were, or could be, directly affected by the CalWORKs program. During a three week period in May 2002, the CPG oversaw an outreach effort that reached into every corner of the County, surveying over 8,500 families and conducting 27 focus groups. This outreach effort and the data it generated, summarized in the Children Planning Council's report *Running Out of Time: Voices of Parents Struggling to Move from Welfare to Work*, significantly determined the initial recommendations drafted by the CPG, and influenced a large number of the consensus recommendations forwarded to the Board in each iteration of the process. Both the scope of the outreach effort, and the intention of using the resulting data to directly influence recommendations about immediate budget priorities, were defining aspects of this process.

Another distinct feature of the process was the structure of the stakeholder groups and the responsibility of the delegates representing those groups. No previous County process had identified specific stakeholder groups and authorized those groups to choose delegates to represent their interests in the deliberations. The responsibility of the delegates required an extraordinary commitment of time, not only to participate in the myriad meetings, but also to be in regular communication with their constituencies. This was particularly challenging for the delegates of the CPG, who were chosen to represent a group of hundreds of community leaders and advocates, and for the delegates of the New Directions Task Force, who were representing the interests of multiple County Departments. Members of these groups often experienced conflicting interests among themselves that had to be resolved before developing the groups' formal positions.

A sixth distinguishing element of the process was the role played by a neutral facilitator. In previous processes, most notably the process that generated the Long-Term Family Self-Sufficiency Plan, a Department representative had designed and led the deliberations and other parts of the process. In the CalWORKs Prioritization Process, however, the stakeholder groups agreed to invite a professional facilitator to:

- Work with the lead delegates from each of the five stakeholder groups to design the overall process;
- Facilitate all delegates meetings;
- Mediate as needed any conflicts that emerged within or between stakeholder groups;
- Design the format for the final report to the Board; and



- Write the final report to the Board after the first iteration of the process, and ensure that all reports accurately reflect the agreements and divergent recommendations among the five stakeholder groups.

A final distinguishing feature of the Prioritization Process was the way it worked to establish consensus and reflect divergence among the delegates. For each substantive decision made, delegates used a tool called Gradients of Agreement to assess the level of agreement among them (see Attachment 2). In addition, the final report format insured that, when delegates could not reach agreement, the perspectives of each group were presented to the Board as succinctly and accurately as possible. This report format not only helped delegates trust that their distinct voices and perspectives would be shared with the Board offices, it also helped the Board offices understand the contours of the policy disagreements when they could not be resolved. As one interviewee observed, "I was surprised by how we could have both consensus and divergence." Another shared: "It was such a thoughtful process. It was clear where delegates disagreed and why. There was no need for guessing. It was all right there." Attachment 3 includes an excerpt from the first delegates' report illustrating how the delegates' consensus and divergent recommendations were communicated to the Board.

## *Factors contributing to the success of the process*

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### SUMMARY

- The role of the Board of Supervisors
  - The role of the DPSS Director and DPSS staff
  - The role of the CAO
  - The role of the Children's Planning Council
  - Knowledge and expertise of the delegates
  - The skills of the facilitator
  - Three commitments demonstrated by all delegates: (1) a willingness to commit the time required for developing shared understanding and consensus; (2) a commitment of letting go of pre-determined outcomes to seek consensus where possible; and (3) a commitment to strengthening relationships through continued dialogue and sustained goodwill.
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While the innovative design of the CalWORKs Prioritization Process supported its success, so too did a number of other factors.

### **1. The Role of the Board of Supervisors**

The role played by the Supervisors was essential to the success of the process. The Board both formally sanctioned the process, and retained ultimate authority over the result: that is, the stakeholders developed recommendations for the Board, but the Board was the ultimate decision-maker. This role helped equalize the power of influence between the Department and CAO on the one hand and delegates from the other stakeholder groups on the other. Moreover, by accepting all of the June 2002 consensus recommendations from the stakeholder groups, and forging its own way on the divergent recommendations without consistently favoring one group's perspective over another, the Board demonstrated its belief in the legitimacy of the process. Had the

Board rejected many of the consensus recommendations, either on its own or because of lobbying by outside groups, such action would have undermined the credibility of the process, and likely discouraged several of the stakeholder groups from participating in any subsequent deliberations.

Board deputies also played a crucial role in this process, particularly in the first iteration. Throughout February, March, and April 2002, when the various stakeholder groups were assessing whether they would participate and under what conditions, several Board Deputies offered steadfast support for this process, and in particular, for the full participation of the Community Planning Group. The Deputies' consistent advocacy for this process helped convince the CPG, and members from several other stakeholder groups as well, that the deliberations of the five stakeholder groups would be taken seriously by the Board.

In addition, the Board not only sanctioned the process, it also defined its scope, desired outcome, and deadline. While many delegates expressed frustration with the constraints imposed by these Board decisions, the deadlines and required products also helped bound the process and create a clear focus.

## **2. The Role of the DPSS Director and DPSS Staff**

No part of this process could have usefully gone forward without the support and dedication of DPSS leadership and staff. The willingness of the new DPSS Director to invest his staff's time in this process, and the willingness of DPSS staff to engage openly with other stakeholders in the exploration of the Department's budget, were crucial components of this process.



The expertise provided by DPSS staff—concerning the Department’s budget, the various funding streams in play, the particular CalWORKs and LTFSS programs, and the many political and policy dimensions of the deliberations—was essential. None of the stakeholder groups could have reached their individual conclusions, or understood the implications of the other groups’ positions, without the content knowledge and expertise shared so willingly and effectively by DPSS staff.

Equally impressive was the willingness of the DPSS Director to respect the outcome of each of the iterations of the process, and to submit reports to the Board encouraging them to embrace the consensus recommendations and to reach their own conclusions on the issues where the stakeholder groups had not reached consensus. This action demonstrated more clearly than his words alone ever could that he believed in the legitimacy of the process, and helped other stakeholder groups deepen their trust in the Director, the Department, and the process.

### **3. The Role of the CAO**

The active engagement of CAO staff was also essential to the success of this process. As with the Board, had delegates reached consensus and then had their work undone by the CAO outside of the process, the process would have unraveled. Instead, the CAO consistently demonstrated his support for the process, and in particular for the full inclusion of the Community Planning Group. Moreover, the budget expertise of the CAO delegates, and their willingness to question some of the initial budget assumptions presented by DPSS, increased the capacity of delegates from all of the stakeholder groups to understand and examine the Department’s budget with more precision and depth.



#### **4. The Role of the Children's Planning Council**

While not a separate stakeholder, the presence of the Children's Planning Council (CPC) was felt during every stage of the Prioritization Process. CPC helped make possible the emergence of the Community Planning Group, not only by advocating for such a group at one of the first DPSS public hearings in February 2002, but more crucially, by allocating resources to provide the facilitation and other staff support needed by the CPG during the early stages of its formation. CPC also paid for the production of the report *Running Out of Time: Voices of Parents Struggling to Move from Welfare to Work* that summarized the data from the Step 2 community outreach effort in the first iteration of the process.

The Executive Director for CPC also leveraged the trust that CPC enjoyed from all the stakeholders. She was in constant conversation with Board Deputies, Department Directors, and other key County and community leaders throughout the months of February, March, and April 2002. She not only listened to and responded to the concerns from the different groups and individuals, but also sought to build bridges of trust and shared commitment to the process whenever possible.

#### **5. The Knowledge and Expertise of the Delegates**

One of the less obvious but no less important factors that led to the success of this process was the knowledge and expertise of the delegates. Given the compressed timeline, particularly in the first iteration of the process, the delegates' knowledge and expertise were essential. Many of the delegates had participated in the LTFSS planning process and had first-hand experience with a number of the funded projects. Moreover,

most of the delegates had worked with various aspects of the CalWORKs program, and with other efforts to support people struggling to survive economically in Los Angeles County. Consequently, delegates from the CPG, the Public Social Services Commission, and the New Directions Task Force held programmatic knowledge on par with delegates from DPSS and the CAO. Without this balance of knowledge being present at the start of the process, the power imbalance would have been too great to support meaningful dialogue and consensus-building under the time lines imposed by the Board and the County budget process.

## **6. The Skills of the Facilitator<sup>14</sup>**

All of the people interviewed for this report highlighted the skills of the facilitator as a factor contributing to the overall success of the process. Some of the skills highlighted in the interviews included the ability to:

- Earn the trust of all of the stakeholders, and to reflect a commitment to be on “all sides;”
- Master the content of the conversation to be able to understand the substance of the convergence and divergence that emerged;
- Create a safe environment in which divergence was expected, welcomed, and worked with creatively;
- Help participants discern and understand the interests supporting the positions being advocated; and

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<sup>14</sup> The primary author of this report, John Ott, was also the facilitator for all of the iterations of this process. All sections of this report, and particularly this section, have been vetted with many of the delegates to ensure that the analysis accurately reflects their perspectives and experiences.

- Help participants focus on the larger purpose of the LTFSS projects and the CalWORKs program even while deliberating the myriad and intricate details of the budget recommendations.



## 7. Three Commitments Demonstrated by all Delegates

Interviewees also identified several commitments exhibited by participants as critical to the success of the process, including: (1) a willingness to commit the time required for developing shared understanding and consensus; (2) a commitment to letting go of pre-determined outcomes in order to seek consensus whenever possible; and (3) a commitment to strengthening relationships through continued dialogue and sustained goodwill.

The time commitment required was surprising to many interviewees. “Coming into the process I didn’t expect the level of work required.” Another reflected that the “quality of the people and their commitment to spend whatever time was needed” was essential to the success of the effort. For example, many participants were in constant communication with their constituencies outside of the formal meetings, sharing results of the deliberations and getting direction on next steps. In contrast to other County-sponsored processes, the delegates also explicitly agreed that only delegates—and no alternates—could participate in the meetings. This commitment to maintain a consistent composition of the group enabled delegates to sustain complex and detailed conversations that created the foundation for the consensus recommendations that eventually emerged.

The second commitment identified by the interviewees was the participants’ willingness to remain open to others’ ideas. Interviewees explained that the delegates’ sustained willingness to negotiate allowed the group to develop a coherent product and avoid defaulting to an incoherent “wish list” that had typified the results of other County processes. One interviewee explained that “people had to struggle with their own biases and how each person perceived a program. We had to discern the impact on

the whole and not only on our own Department or organization.” Most interviewees emphasized the openness demonstrated by the DPSS delegates as having had a particularly positive impact on the process. “It was the first time [in my experience] that a Department was willing to take risks and not control the entire outcome.”

A final commitment identified by interviewees was the delegates’ shared commitment to strengthening their relationships despite differences. One interviewee explained that the lead delegate from DPSS was personally “willing to take institutional heat” from community advocates, rendering a human face to a bureaucratic institution that allowed hardened positions to soften. In addition, “the community members also took the risk of not being able to deliver and placed their credibility on the line.” The faith and trust that the delegates were willing to bring to their relationships played an essential leadership role in sustaining the process over time.

## Section 4

### IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE PLANNING EFFORTS

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#### SUMMARY

- Initiatives like the Prioritization Process can produce coherent policy recommendations not possible through typical decision-making processes. They should not, however, be entered into casually due to the substantial commitments required to support long-term success.
  - Developing the scope, product, and timeline for each process is an essential first step.
  - Supervisors and sponsoring Departments must be open to adopting recommendations from stakeholders.
- 

The experience of the CalWORKs Prioritization Process, and the subsequent successes of the LA DMH stakeholder processes, demonstrate the power of such efforts to meaningfully involve diverse stakeholders and generate coherent policy recommendations for the Board or sponsoring Department. Potential solutions that might never emerge through more typical decision-making efforts not only are discovered, but also become feasible through the broad level of support offered by key stakeholders.

For such processes to produce meaningful recommendations, however, enormous investments of time, energy, and resources are required from all stakeholders, particularly from the staff of the lead Department, and from those individuals and organizations who take responsibility for organizing the community engagement efforts. Moreover, participants must risk believing that their commitment will be worthwhile, that their perspectives and input will be taken seriously by the sponsoring Department and the Board of Supervisors.



Given the substantial costs and demands of these efforts, all of those interviewed agreed that such processes should not be casually considered or begun. They should be used in circumstances that require deeper levels of engagement, discernment, and alignment of perspectives than are possible through more typical policy-making processes. Such processes have been used effectively in Los Angeles County and elsewhere to:

- Address substantial budget shortfalls;
- Make recommendations to help resolve particularly contentious policy issues;
- Develop short- or long-term strategic plans; and
- Support learning and shared understanding among diverse stakeholder groups about a complex policy or implementation issue.

An essential first step for the Board or Department in launching such a process is clarifying the scope, required products, and timelines. This clarity will help ensure that the deliberations do not get lost in irrelevant details, or get hijacked by competing needs or special interests. It will also help participants understand what is expected of them, and help them justify the time commitments knowing the specific products required and when the process will end.

Regardless of its focus, however, the ultimate success of the process will depend on the willingness of the Board or Department to be open to the recommendations that emerge from the participants. If the Board or Department is already wedded to a particular solution, undertaking a process like the CalWORKs Prioritization Process will generate

enormous ill will among critical stakeholders.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the Board or the sponsoring Department must also be willing to resist pressures from groups advocating for their interests outside of the process.

The openness of the Board or Department to stakeholder recommendations will also affect the assessment of who should participate in the process. As a general rule, the more inclusive community stakeholders perceive a process to be, and the greater the effort made to ensure active participation, the more the larger community will support the resulting recommendations and actions. Some of the considerations that should affect who is invited to participate include:

- What groups are directly affected by the decisions under consideration?
- What are the distinct or divergent perspectives that need to be addressed? Who can effectively represent those perspectives in the deliberations?
- Who has sufficient knowledge and expertise to participate in the process?
- Who has sufficient credibility with the ultimate decision-maker?

A commitment to begin such a process must also be matched by a commitment to provide the resources and the time for such processes to succeed. The resources needed include support for the design of the process, facilitation, development of data and other materials to educate the stakeholders, and meeting-related expenses, including transportation and other kinds of supports for community members who may not otherwise be able to participate.

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<sup>15</sup> Many of the members of the Community Planning Group, for example, experienced the first LTFSS planning process in exactly this way. That is, from their perspective, the process demanded enormous time and energy that ultimately had little impact because some of the Departments already knew what they would recommend for funding regardless of the outcome of the process. This experience led many CPG members to have serious reservations about participating in the subsequent CalWORKs Prioritization Process.

## CONCLUSION

The CalWORKs Prioritization Process was an innovative response by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to a politically charged dilemma. Confronted with a substantial budget shortfall in the CalWORKs program, and the prospect of having to significantly curtail services to some of the County's most vulnerable families, Supervisors asked for guidance from key stakeholders, including DPSS, the CAO, the New Directions Task Force, the Public Social Services Commission, and a remarkable coalition of regional planning bodies and community-based organizations.

The resulting process generated substantial consensus on how to allocate a significantly diminished pool of funds for CalWORKs and related services. It also modeled a structure for creating shared learning and engagement around a complex set of budget and policy dilemmas among multiple stakeholders, including stakeholders who are often adversaries in other contexts.

In his paper entitled *Condition A – Condition B: Why Do We Do Strategic Planning?* CAO David Janssen writes that “the only sustaining quality of any successful organization is its ability to learn[,] and a learning organization is one that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future.”<sup>16</sup> The innovations of the CalWORKs Prioritization Process helped transform seemingly intractable conflict into generative learning and collaborative solutions. While not appropriate for every context, the learning and decision-making model pioneered through this process can help accelerate the County's emergence as a learning organization. Beyond the consensus that emerged, and the lasting impact on the CalWORKs program credited to this effort, the contribution that

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<sup>16</sup> Janssen, David, *Condition A – Condition B: Why Do We Do Strategic Planning?*, undated, p. 1.



the Prioritization Process made to the evolving transformation of the County's culture may be its most significant achievement.

## **ATTACHMENT 1**

**PROGRAMS IMPLEMENTED OR SUSTAINED THROUGH THE PROCESS  
THAT ARE NOW A PERMANENT PART OF THE CalWORKs PROGRAM**

The following programs were recommended for funding by the delegates during the multiple iterations of the process and subsequently funded by the Board of Supervisors with a combination of one-time performance incentive dollars and single allocation funds. The Department has since recommended, and the Board approved, funding these programs with on-going single allocation funds as part of the core CalWORKs Program.

| Program Name & Description   | Outcomes  |
|--|---|
| <p><b>CalWORKs Coordination Services: Adult School/Regional Occupational Centers and Programs (ROC/Ps)</b></p> <p>The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) provide coordination services to support participants engaged in Adult School/ROC/P activities. Coordination and support services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accepting referrals from DPSS offices;</li> <li>• Assisting participants with enrolling in Self-Initiated Programs;</li> <li>• Ensuring participants are enrolled in programs in accordance with their Welfare-to-Work employment plans;</li> <li>• Facilitating communication between participant, school, and DPSS staff; and</li> <li>• Ensuring required paperwork is returned to GAIN Services Workers.</li> </ul> | <p>In FY 2005-06, LACOE and the individual districts that sub-contract with LACOE served a monthly average of 605 participants at 17 sites. Also, during FY 2005-06, LAUSD served a total of 1803 participants at 16 sites.</p>   |
| <p><b>Careers in Child Care</b></p> <p>The Careers in Child Care Program trains participants in the area of Early Childhood Development through a two-year vocational program at nine community colleges throughout Los Angeles County. Upon completion, participants earn an Associates Teacher's Permit or a Teacher's Permit. Program services include: academic training, hands-on experience in high quality child care centers, one-on-one tutoring, and mentors.</p>  | <p>Since the implementation of the Careers Program in 1999, 350 students have completed the program, including 83 students who have earned an Associate of Arts Degree in Early Childhood Development. Currently, there are approximately 255 students enrolled and of the 255, 208 are employed in child care centers.</p> |
| <p><b>Community College CalWORKs Program</b></p> <p>The program offers comprehensive support services to assist CalWORKs students in completing their educational program, complying with State work participation requirements and acquiring employment.</p> <p>The CalWORKs Office at the Community College ensures that the GAIN participant is enrolled in the appropriate classes/program to meet his/her employment goal and works closely with the participant and the GAIN Regional Office to assist with ancillary payments for books and supplies.</p>   | <p>In FY 2005-06, 4,195 CalWORKs participants who enrolled in community college classes received support services from the Community College CalWORKs Program.</p>  |



| Program Name & Description   | Outcomes   |
|--|--|
| <p><b>County Apprenticeship Programs</b></p> <p><b>Clerical Certification Training Program</b> is designed to provide paid work experience and off-site vocational training. The goal of the program is to provide participants with the skills and experience necessary to secure and maintain full-time permanent employment.</p> <p><b>Grounds Maintenance Program</b> provides paid work experience, classroom training, and supportive services to assist participants in securing unsubsidized employment. Participants work at the Department of Parks and Recreation and are assigned to additional hours of grounds maintenance classroom training.</p> | <p>Since the inception of the Clerical Training program in October 2003, 49 participants have successfully completed the program and 14 have been hired throughout the County.</p> <p>Since the pilot of the Grounds Maintenance Helper Program started in 1999, 81 participants have been enrolled. Of the 81 serviced, 19 have become permanently employed, 17 of which were employed with the Department of Parks and Recreation.</p>                               |
| <p><b>Transitional Subsidized Employment</b></p> <p>TSE is employment for which the employer receives a subsidy to offset some of the cost of employing the participants. The goal of TSE is to prepare participants for unsubsidized employment by assisting them in the removal of barriers to employment by providing them job skills and vocational training, behavior skills, and enhancing existing job skills directly related to jobs available in Los Angeles County.</p>   | <p>TSE has given participants the opportunity to gain work experience and increase their self-esteem and motivation. TSE is an open entry program with good job placements. During FY 05-06, a total of 808 participants were enrolled and 458 participants found jobs. The data since TSE inception (March 2003) shows that of a total of 2,289 participants enrolled, 1,651 participants completed training programs and 1,107 participants were placed in jobs.</p> |
| <p><b>Emergency Assistance to Prevent Eviction</b></p> <p>The Emergency Assistance to Prevent Eviction Program assists families who are at risk of losing their housing because of non-payment of rent due to a financial hardship (not for any other lease/contract violation) to receive up to \$2,000 to pay rent and/or utilities for up to two months in arrears to assist them in maintaining permanent housing. Funds can be accessed "as needed" until the \$2,000 limit has been exhausted.</p>   | <p>During FY 2005-06, DPSS helped 4,732 families cover their rent/utility arrearages at an average of \$644 per family and a total cost of \$3,046,750. The Emergency Assistance to Prevent Eviction Program reduced homelessness by enabling these families to remain in stable housing.</p>  |
| <p><b>Housing Relocation Program</b></p> <p>The Housing Relocation Program is a once-in- a-lifetime benefit that supports CalWORKs families when they need to relocate for a family member to accept an employment offer, to keep a job they already have, or to move closer to work due to transportation or childcare issues. Funds can be used to pay moving expenses such as truck rental, security and public utility deposits and to purchase a stove or refrigerator if they are not included in the new housing.</p>   | <p>From program implementation in October 2000 through August 2006, DPSS has assisted a total of 167 families at a total cost of \$237,000 with Housing Relocation funds, making it possible for them to accept an employment offer or to keep a job they already had.</p>   |

| Program Name & Description   | Outcomes   |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Moving Assistance</b></p> <p>The Moving Assistance Program provides funds to CalWORKs families who are experiencing a financial hardship, including homelessness or at risk of homelessness, to assist them in securing affordable permanent housing. Funds can be used for security/utility deposits, truck rental, and new appliances if they are not included with the new housing. Funds are available once in a lifetime with limited exceptions.</p> | <p>During FY05-06, DPSS helped 3,254 families secure affordable permanent housing at an average cost of \$733 per family for a total cost of \$2,385,099. The Moving Assistance funds reduced homelessness by enabling these families to move from housing that was not affordable into stable affordable housing or from homelessness into permanent housing.</p> |
| <p><b>Vehicle Diagnosis and Repair Program</b></p> <p>This program provides vehicle repair and diagnostic assistance to eligible participants to ensure continued participation in GAIN and/or employment retention. Participants may receive up to \$1,000 for major car repairs within a 2-year period and up to \$50 for each vehicle diagnosis. Repairs must be pre-approved and completed at a Bureau of Automotive Repair (BAR)-approved station.</p>      | <p>In FY 2005-06, 1,067 participants received assistance through this program, at an average cost of \$770 per participant.</p>  |

**ATTACHMENT 2**

**GRADIENTS OF AGREEMENT TOOL**



## GRADIENTS OF AGREEMENT

| Endorse           | Endorse with a minor point of contention | Agree with reservations    | Abstain                   | Stand aside  | Formally disagree, but will go with majority                                   | Formally disagree with request to be absolved from implementation                           | Can't go forward                             |
|-------------------|--|----------------------------|---------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| <i>I like it.</i> | <i>Basically I like it.</i>              | <i>I can live with it.</i> | <i>I have no opinion.</i> | <i>I don't like this, but I don't want to hold up the group.</i> | <i>I want my disagreement noted in writing, but I'll support the decision.</i> | <i>I don't want to stop anyone else, but I don't want to be involved in implementation.</i> | <i>We have to continue the conversation.</i> |

This scale (not the color scheme) was developed by Community at Work, <http://communityatwork.com>. For any substantive recommendation considered by the delegates, each delegate was asked to declare where s/he stood on this continuum. A recommendation was deemed to be accepted by the group when all delegates declared a position to the left of abstain. For those delegates who had minor points of contention or reservations, they were given the opportunity to have their concerns noted in the final report. If one or more delegates were to the right of the “stand aside” position, then the facilitator would continue to work with the group to explore opportunities for addressing the unresolved issues. If ultimately no consensus was possible, then the divergent perspectives were reflected in the final report. Attachment 3 contains a portion of the first final report that illustrates how divergent perspectives were communicated to the Board.

**ATTACHMENT 3**

**EXCERPTS FROM THE JUNE 17, 2003  
FINAL REPORT TO THE BOARD**

The first report to the Board, submitted on June 17, 2002, contained an overarching narrative that summarized the consensus and divergent recommendations from the five stakeholder groups. Several attachments accompanied the narrative. Attachment A mapped the consensus recommendations and the divergent recommendations, and included text notes. The following table is an excerpt from Attachment A, without the accompanying text notes:

| Consensus recommendations involving funding |                                      |  |   |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Programs/Services                           | Proposed FY 2002-03<br>County Budget | Additional need not<br>funded in Proposed FY<br>2002-03 Budget | Recommendation for<br>funding change in FY<br>2002-03 funding |
| <b>CalWORKs Implemented</b>                 |                                      |  |   |
| Eligibility Case Management                 | 111,550,774                          | 24,605,000   | 24,605,000  |
| Welfare to Work Case Management             | 82,194,000                           | 7,599,000  | 7,599,000   |
| Cal-Learn Case Management                   | 9,907,000                            | 462,000  | 462,000   |
| Careers in Child Care (10 contracts)        | 0                                    | 2,200,000  | 2,000,000   |
| Domestic Violence Contract                  | 10,600,000                           | 2,600,000  | 2,600,000   |
| GAIN Ancillary                              | 3,500,000                            | 900,000  | 900,000   |
| GAIN Transportation                         | 15,000,000                           | 2,000,000  | 2,000,000   |
| LACOE Job Club (includes LTFSS #1)          | 8,522,000                            | 1,078,000  | 1,078,000   |
| Learning Disability                         | 2,000,000                            | 2,000,000  | 2,000,000   |
| Mental Health Contract                      | 15,000,000                           | 5,000,000  | 2,000,000   |
| Substance Abuse Contract                    | 16,500,000                           | 5,100,000  | 5,100,000   |
| <b>Sub-total of recommendations:</b>        |                                      |  | <b>50,344,000</b>   |

Attachment B focused on the recommendations where there was divergence among the groups. For each program where there was divergence, the attachment showed the different funding recommendations, and then provided space for each group to share the rationale that underpinned its recommendation. The following table is an excerpt from Attachment B:



## ATTACHMENT B: EXPLORATION OF DIVERGENCE AMONG THE STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

| Programs/Services           | Proposed FY<br>2002-03 County<br>Budget | Additional need<br>not funded in<br>Proposed FY<br>2002-03 Budget | Recommendation for change in FY 2002-03 funding |     |             |             |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|-----|-------------|-------------|
|                             |   |   | DPSS  | CAO | CPG         | NDTF        |
| <b>CalWORKs Implemented</b> |   |   |   |     |             |             |
| Home Interview Program      | 5,431,226                               | 0   | 0   | 0   | (5,431,226) | (5,431,226) |

**THE SCOPE ISSUE:** The recommendations to reduce the amount in the proposed FY 2002-03 County budget for already implemented CalWORKs programs and services give rise to a scope issue among the five stakeholder groups. DPSS and the CAO believe the five stakeholder groups should take the County's FY 2002-03 proposed CalWORKs budget as given, focusing only on the question of whether or not to increase the allocations. That is, these two groups believe that recommendations to reduce the amount in the proposed FY 2002-03 County CalWORKs budget are beyond the scope of this process. The Community Planning Group, the New Directions Task Force, and the Public Social Services Commission, on the other hand, believe that this process can recommend reducing amounts in the proposed FY 2002-03 County budget for CalWORKs implemented programs and services in order to increase proposed allocations for other line items.

**DPSS Comments:** The Home Interview Program was developed in response to recommendations by the Grand Jury to reduce welfare fraud in Los Angeles County and specific instructions from the Board of Supervisors. The Home Interview Program was piloted, and the pilot demonstrated that the costs of the program were more than offset by savings in CalWORKs grants: the annual program cost of \$5.4 million corresponds to \$42 million in estimated grant savings. Accordingly, the Home Interview Program was implemented countywide. Since its countywide implementation, the Home Interview Program has contributed to the reduction of welfare fraud and has also become an important source of referrals for mental health, substance abuse, and domestic violence services for CalWORKs participants. Experience has shown that the individualized interviews with applicants outside of the DPSS district office frequently lead applicants to share information regarding their need for specialized supportive services which they might not otherwise share. When surveyed, CalWORKs participants express a strong positive assessment of the program.

**Community Planning Group Comments:** The basic assumption of this program is that poor people who apply for aid cannot be trusted to tell the truth on their applications. DPSS conducts unscheduled walk-throughs of applicants' homes to make sure they are not living beyond their means. This offensive policy has created an environment of hostility and mistrust that is not conducive to the identification of supportive service needs - a stated goal of the program. Too many applicants are denied benefits because they are not home when the worker arrives unannounced. The policy also has had the unfortunate effect of discouraging immigrants and others from applying for Medi-Cal. Our understanding is that the cost savings claimed by DPSS are based on untried allegations of fraud which occurred in less than 3% of all cases in the pilot program. DPSS claims that participants surveyed expressed a strong positive assessment of the program, however, less than 5% of the more than 4,800 people who were involved in the pilot responded to DPSS' courtesy cards.



**New Directions Task Force Comments:** While NDTF agrees that resources and efforts must be in place to detect welfare fraud, the Task Force believes the Home Interview Program not only is ineffective in detecting the type of fraud it seeks to find, but is intrusive. Coupling fraud detection with identification of supportive service needs is inappropriate. The NDTF recommends to eliminate this component altogether.

**Public Social Services Commission Comments:** The Commission has serious reservations about the utility of this program, particularly in light of the current budget crisis. From a policy standpoint, the Commission believes it is a mistake to assign Eligibility Workers to perform tasks that are being undertaken primarily to prevent fraud. Doing so drives a wedge between the Department and those it serves precisely at the point of the recipient's greatest need and vulnerability.

The Commission recognizes, of course, that fraud prevention is not the only goal of the current Home Interview Program, and that the Department attempts to use the visits positively to inform welfare applicants of the programs and services (such as domestic violence and substance abuse programs) which may be needed by the applicants. While the effectiveness of these efforts by the Department are challenged, the Commission believes that it is clear that such services could be offered more cost effectively if Eligibility Workers as a whole were better trained and could provide this information effectively in the office at the time the applicant applies or through Job Club, as opposed to having to visit homes throughout the vast area that is Los Angeles County. The Commission also believes that services now (or proposed to be) provided through other programs, such as the Multi-Disciplinary Family Inventory (a \$3.1 million dollar program), are services which are, and should be, provided by Eligibility Workers. Unfortunately, because the Eligibility Workers are not adequately trained, these services now need to be offered a second time at much greater expense by other County employees.

The Commission further observes that the Community Survey found significant problems of civility and effectiveness with regard to the staff of the Department. Poor service not only disserves welfare recipients, but ultimately adds costs as problems must be revisited to be solved, errors must be corrected, badly needed services (such as assistance in domestic violence cases) are delayed, appointments rescheduled, etc.

Each of the problems discussed above can be ameliorated, if not solved, by better training of Eligibility Workers. Accordingly, the Commission recommends eliminating the current home visitation program and redirecting at least \$5 million to be spent on better training of Eligibility Workers and continuing and expanding the initiatives already under way at the Department to improve the quality and civility of the Department's services. Training, including cross-cultural sensitivity, must be enhanced to ensure workers' attitudes are both knowledgeable and customer-oriented so that providing good service and useful information right from the very beginning of a recipient's application becomes the rule, rather than the exception.

This report format not only insured that the perspectives of the various stakeholder groups could be distinguished and catalogued; it also provided the Supervisors with a straightforward way of understanding the differing rationales for the groups' divergent positions, and a beginning place for creating the justifications for their final decisions.

**ATTACHMENT 4**

**LIST OF DELEGATES FOR THE FIVE STAKEHOLDER GROUPS  
AND  
PEOPLE INTERVIEWED FOR THIS REPORT**



## DELEGATES FOR THE FIVE STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

| CHIEF ADMINISTRATION OFFICE  |  |
|--|--|
| James Blount   | <i>David Janssen</i>   |
| Paul Croney  | James Jones  |
| Alisa Drakodaidis  | <i>Carlos Pineda</i>   |
| COMMUNITY PLANNING GROUP   |  |
| <i>Yolanda Arias</i><br>Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles                          | <i>Colleen Mooney</i><br>SPA 8 Council Convener<br>South Bay Center for Counseling |
| <i>Nancy Au</i><br>WRAP Family Services<br>Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council | Cyd Spikes<br>South Bay Workforce Investment Board                                 |
| Bob Erlenbusch<br>LA Coalition to End Hunger and Homelessness                        | Margo Wainwright<br>SPA 6 Councilmember  |
| Kate Meiss<br>Neighborhood Legal Services of LA County                               |  |
| DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES   |  |
| <i>Phil Ansell</i>   | Margaret Quinn   |
| Sandra Garcia  | <i>Otto Solorzano</i>  |
| Glenn Jordan   | <i>Bryce Yokomizo</i>  |
| Eileen Kelly   |  |
| NEW DIRECTIONS TASK FORCE  |  |
| <i>Yolie Flores Aguilar</i><br>Children's Planning Council                           | <i>Jane Martin</i><br>Probation Department   |
| Adine Forman<br>Community and Senior Services  | Dennis Murata<br>Department of Mental Health                                       |
| Paul Freedlund<br>Department of Children and Family Services                         | Jeanne Smart<br>Department of Health Services                                      |
| PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES COMMISSION  |  |
| <i>James Adler</i>   | Sylvia Bratincevic   |
| Vibiana Andrade  |  |

## ADDITIONAL INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED FOR THIS REPORT

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <i>Wendy Aron</i><br>Board Deputy, Third District      | <i>Marvin Southard</i><br>Director, Mental Health Department |
| <i>Gerardo Pinedo</i><br>Board Deputy, Second District | <i>Linda Tarnoff</i><br>Former Board Deputy, Fourth District |

**Note:** *Italics* indicates a person who was interviewed for this report.